

VZCZCXRO6378
PP RUEHPA
DE RUEHDK #2892/01 3390914
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 050914Z DEC 06
FM AMEMBASSY DAKAR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7032
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAKAR 002892

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, DRL/IL AND INR/AA
PARIS FOR POL - D'ELIA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/04/2016
TAGS: [ELAB](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [SG](#)
SUBJECT: LABORING UNDER A MISAPPREHENSION: UNIONS PREFER
DIALOG BUT PREPARE FOR CONFRONTATION

REF: A. DAKAR 2120
[B](#). 05 DAKAR 2194
[C](#). 04 DAKAR 1522

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROY L. WHITAKER, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B)
AND (D).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Leaders of Senegal's splintered labor movement prefer dialog with the state, but workers demand action to protest worsening social conditions. A strike by secondary teachers may invalidate the school year, and their union may launch job actions "to remind government we are here." Energy unions are proposing a social compact with Wade, but have warned him he "has one month" to resolve shortages or face possible worker unrest and an election defeat. The truckers' head is fervently loyal to Wade, but says that in a confrontation, he'll back his union. Wade still has room to maneuver, but not much time before coming elections to assuage worker discontent. END SUMMARY.

TEACHERS' DIRTY LOOKS

[1](#)2. (C) Confederation des Syndicats Autonomes (CSA) Secretary General Mamadou Diouf, who has gained immensely in presence and confidence since taking up his job a year ago (Ref B), says the current closure of high schools reflects confusion and divisions in the teacher corps as much as predetermined strategy. The Government copes with shortage of teachers in the professional civil service by hiring substitutes and part-timers (though many of these work for years). The three categories earn different salaries for the same job, and internal rivalries have created a dynamic in which each tries to prove itself more activist than the others. The Government has drained the treasury this year with raises for judges, the military and others, Diouf says, so there is little prospect for teacher raises. A first-ever "annee blanche" or uncredited school year in the high schools is possible.

[1](#)3. (C) Diouf says Wade has seemingly lost interest in labor issues. While he had a competent labor minister from 2000 to 2004, his replacement was "less than zero," and the new Minister Abdoulaye Babou, appointed late November, is "unknown" to labor. Wade's last real attempt to reach out to labor was last May Day, and Diouf expects he won't hear from the Labor Ministry until April, so "it can report to Wade that it followed up on his promises." The CSA is trying to bring together some of the largest of Senegal's 18 labor confederations on behalf of a "united front." While building the new front, though, the CSA may launch some job actions between now and February elections just "to show we're still here."

OUT OF GAS

¶4. (C) Confederation des Travailleurs Senegalais - Forces du Changement (CTS-FC) head Cheikh Diop represents virtually all of Senegal's energy workers in both the electricity and petroleum sectors. Diop owes both his position and CNTS-FC's creation to Wade, and would like to forge a "national compact" bringing unions and government closer together. He sees the energy sector as hidebound and inefficient, one in which widespread nepotism effectively excludes hiring of highly trained new talent. A more immediate problem is that, as of December 1, Senegal had "three or four weeks oil supply, and there was no immediate promise of relief. In order to preserve jobs and streamline the sector, the union was about to propose an agreement in which workers would give up butane cooking gas subsidies, and Government in return would guarantee "programmed raises" in salary. That deal would be hard to sell to workers, but it had to be done. Meanwhile, Diop had warned Wade, "if you don't solve energy problems, you'll lose the elections."

TRUCKERS' TRAVAILS

¶5. (C) We had our annual lunch with the moody Mody Guiro, who as head of CNTS was for many years undisputed prince of the Socialist Government's company union (Refs B and C). He was typically uncommunicative, playing with his cell phone, staring at the ceiling or trenching into his grilled fish. Luckily he had brought with him Alassane Ndoeye, head of the powerful truckers' union who lamented the dilapidation of transport companies' trucking equipment, deterioration of the nation's roads and unpredictability of petrol supplies in the countryside. Wade's economic performance had in general been unsatisfying, Ndoeye admitted, and that caused him pain

DAKAR 00002892 002 OF 002

because "Wade is my political leader." If ever forced by social need to lead his union in a strike which would weaken Wade, though, he would not hesitate to do so. At this, Guiro bestirred himself to interject that his once murderously tense relationship with Wade had improved, and that he was doing everything possible to calm intensifying government-worker distrust. Guiro warned, though, that there was a growing gap between political leadership and labor, and that government needed to respond soon to meet worker demands and ward off strikes and mass protests.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) Having failed to co-opt the union movement as a whole, Wade seems to have lost interest in worker issues even while he cultivates labor leaders in due proportion to the degree of political support they can provide. The CNTS, which Wade's ruling party goons firebombed in 2000, has reached an understanding with President Wade, though even its leader warns of a growing gap between the political elite and workers. Intriguingly, the CNTS splinter group created by Wade recognizes his limitations as a manager of the energy sector, and has warned him of energy shortages' possible electoral consequences. The immediate challenge to the social order, though, comes from the teachers' unions, since school closure affects many families and teachers are politically influential throughout the country. If the teacher strike continues into February, and if other unions elect to show their strength in the streets, both social tranquility and Wade's re-election could be at stake. END COMMENT.

¶7. (U) Visit Dakar's classified website at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/af/dakar>.
JACOBS